

By Kerry Blankenship Allen

## ISLAND FEVER

*Marla Daily's long love affair  
with the Channel Islands*

**T**he islands create a feeling you can't duplicate," says Marla Daily, president of the Santa Cruz Island Foundation. "The wind, the rocks, the land and the smell—it's something you can't describe, something you must feel." Daily's passion for all eight Channel Islands has only deepened during 20 years of near-total immersion in the island chain's rich natural and cultural history.

Raised in Santa Barbara, Daily made her first trip to Santa Cruz Island in 1973, just after graduating from UC Santa Barbara as a cultural anthropology major. The Anthropology Department was looking for a cook/anthropologist for its Santa Cruz Island field station, and Daily, who had worked as a caterer in college, was the perfect candidate.

Daily became a friend, and later an employee, of the late Carey Stanton, who then owned 90 percent of Santa Cruz Island. Daily began to assist Stanton in his search for island-specific artifacts—from books to artwork to bottles of wine and maps—and also worked for the Channel Islands Archive at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History.

It was the beginning of her long love affair with the islands. "I was inescapably and happily involved with researching all the Channel Islands," she recalls, "collecting island books and references, conducting interviews and learning more about the island's botany, biology and history." Daily's early work included tagging elephant seals, collecting flower specimens and even excavating a mam-

moth tusk on Santa Cruz Island. Her passion eventually inspired her to write a book, *California's Channel Islands: 1,001 Questions Answered* (1987).

In 1985, Stanton established the Santa Cruz Island Foundation to ensure that after his death, his work would be preserved for public benefit. The foundation, which upon Stanton's death received his estate, interprets the cultural and natural history of all eight Channel Islands. As president, Daily is primarily an educator—her more than 40 publishing projects range from historical anthologies to a children's story based on a rooster that lived on Santa Cruz Island.

*The Santa Cruz Anthology* (1989) includes stories from ranchers, adventurers and loners. *Chapel of the Holy Cross* (1991) chronicles the 100-year history of the chapel on Santa Cruz Island.

In 1993 Daily worked with the National Park Service to build a one-room museum on tiny Santa Barbara Island, garnering over \$40,000 in grants for the facility that receives some 12,000 visitors annually. She has also spearheaded rehabilitation of the chapel on Santa Cruz Island and installation of an archaeological museum on Santa Cruz Island. Future plans include restoring historic buildings at the Stanton Ranch.

Daily works in a small downtown office, where her dedication and hard work

have made her the area's quintessential Channel Islands expert. But this is clearly more than a job. Surrounded by decades of memorabilia, Daily is in her own dream come true, living and breathing the romance of the islands. ≈

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WM. B. DEWEY